

ITALY

State terror and proletarian counter-power



REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE

In a certain sense Italy is a lab for revolution. The bourgeoisie tests there its newest inventions. The working class fights there its most advanced battles. But conditions and standards in Italy are very different from other Western European countries.

There are certain similarities though, especially with the 32 Counties: the Italian State, like the Free State and Stormont, has never succeeded in getting itself accepted as a legitimate State by the whole people. It has never managed to completely destroy and subjugate or disorganise the oppressed and exploited. It was always forced to fight for its life and face the strong political opposition coming at it from all different directions.

This is a bit similar to Ireland where since 1922, neither Stormont nor the Free State have succeeded in legitimising themselves in the eyes of the people or crushing the popular resistance.

An important difference however is that the Italian State is an imperialist State. It organises Italian capital abroad and doesn't shy away from military interference when its interests are threatened. It is a former colonial State as well as a fascist State during the 30's and early 40's. The Free State and Stormont, on the contrary, are dependent States; they have served to convey and manage international capital into Ireland. They have organised the exploitation of the Irish people under foreign domination: politically, economically and culturally.

.....

However, there is much to be learnt by some of our local bosses from the Italian capitalists and the way they are handling the crisis. For those Irish bourgeois who are heavily into using State finance or the other cool managers of State controlled factories, the Italian State with its top-heavy State bourgeoisie is a model. Equally so it is a model for the aspiring Parties of that State bourgeoisie - thus the excellent relationships of the Italian Communist Party with SF - the Workers Party. Many Irish technocrats, like their Italian 'friends', would prefer to see "efficient" State Development Corporations replace "faceless multinationals". Thus the hungry look and paid holidays in Italy for many of our own 'progressive' whizz-kids.

This is the way they hope to resolve the crisis of capital and build an independent capitalist economy. For they know the Italian State has been in crisis for years now but they also marvel at the way the Italian bourgeoisie drives elegantly through controlled skids. This is, by the way, a crisis openly admitted by the Italian bourgeoisie. Its Ministers appear regularly on TV charged with corruption, involvement with fascist forces etc. but smiling elegantly they sail through it all for they are, after all, "the best in their job at being Ministers".

But alongside this elegant and open/democratic image, the Italian State is shifting gradually to the right - following its master image: the German State. Introduction of special legislation to fight unofficial strikes, to "combat subversion", imprisonment of insurgent workers, the building of killer squads baptised "anti-terrorist nuclei" and the building of special prisons in far-away islands especially for communist fighters. These activities which RTE and the Irish Times, or SF-WP for that matter, don't particularly like to mention, demonstrate a certain strategy and a definite direction for Italian capital. Blessed by the silence and collaboration of the Italian Communist Party this State terrorism will remind us of certain tactics of the Irish and English bourgeoisie.

Parallel to this political strategy, there is also a developing and corresponding economic strategy. And there again some of the Fianna Fail technocrats are looking with interest: following the hard struggles of the late sixties where the massive industrial concentrations in the North of Italy, like FIAT in Turin, erupted in a wave of strikes, Italian capital began to restructure itself. They moved investment out from the large concentrations, mainly the car industry, into small and medium-type factories spread around the entire territory and mainly concerned with the production of commodities clustered around derivatives of petrol: for example, synthetic textiles. This led to the gradual destruction of the traditional power centres of working class militancy: FIAT, PIRELLI, ALFA-ROMEO etc.

INTRODUCTION

To read the papers or watch TV, you would imagine that Italy was made up exclusively of the three Cs : Chaos, Corruption and Communism. This image of Italy as a country invaded by kidnappers, bomb-throwers and other murdering, thieving and raping hot-blooded black haired Valentinos is, of course, matched in Italy by the similar image, presented to Italian workers, of crazy Paddies, drunk all the time, killing each other because one believes in the Pope while his neighbour is a Prod. Wild bombers, terrorists, religious freaks...these are the images the bourgeoisie presents laughing all the way to the bank.

Both caricatures are false. Both serve to divide the working class with images peppered with racism. Both conceal from Italian and Irish workers the lessons of the struggles led in Italy, Ireland and elsewhere.

And both images hide the fact that there is a fourth and a fifth C which are common to both : CAPITAL and CRISIS. And then a sixth and a seventh : CLASSES and CONFRONTATION. And then perhaps the possibility of communism.

** ** **

A, B and Cs apart, the Italian State has had about 10 different Governments in the last few years. This political instability is the result of a divided bourgeois class which doesn't know, or cannot, (how to) muzzle the struggle of the workers. As a sick man living in fever, the Italian bourgeoisie has learnt to survive, regroup and profit from the crisis as best as it can. As long as they can keep the doctor - the Italian Communist Party - quiet and the priest at hand then they hope to be able to exorcise the devil - the Italian working class.

Capitalism has learnt to survive crises. It has learnt how to shed its useless parts like the snake shedding its dead skin every spring, and still go on breathing and poisoning those it can bite. The Italian bourgeois class has also learnt through bitter experience how to build and restructure itself - lots faster than its European allies.

But this restructuring has also meant violence, redundancies and rocketing prices : 30% last year. It has meant unemployment and no kind of social security for hundreds of thousands of workers. And it has provoked conflict and proletarian counter-violence. It has been met with swift popular response by workers who have refused to carry the burden of the crisis. When electricity and fares went up workers refused to pay the increase, when rents went up they occupied, when the police arrived they fought them back.

This fight has not been easy. It has taken place, and still is, in a climate of bourgeois inspired panic. Of disasters like when in the Bay of Naples pollution caused poisoning and typhoid from fish that had got smeared with lead and mercury. Then in Sveso where hundreds fell seriously ill by Chemical pollution. Like earth tremours coming about as a result of underground explosions. This is what the Italian comrades call capitalist terrorism. Which knows only one medicine: proletarian violence.

For there is of course in Italy, a very famous doctor-nurse who is valiantly trying to keep the bourgeois patient alive and life flowing through the veins: the Italian Communist Party. For it knows that if the patient dies the function of the doctor would be redundant in the old house...and the ' dottore ' is not strong enough yet to lay claim to the fortune. So it compromises and tries to sit on the basement crowd who are knocking at the doors.

This document, result of discussion with Italian comrades and visits of members of the organisation to Italy tries to describe how this is done.

This particular plan, the 'FIAT master plan' as it is referred to in Italy, is little different to the Fianna Fail plan of clusters of small and medium scale factories on "industrial Parks" (Yankee terminology). These parks would be built by the State for occupation by subsidiaries of multinationals....and thus jobs would be created they argue.

The reality of course is rather different. The few jobs which may be created would be primarily administrative and not productive. That's the first point. But secondly, according to the directives issued by the EEC and the conditions laid down by the European Investment Bank, those who would be 'occupied' in these clusters would have to be, at least primarily:

1. School leavers looking for their first job
2. Married women returning to employment
3. Handicapped
4. Those leaving agriculture, and
5. Returning migrants.

In other words, capital is seeking to create jobs for sectors of the people who would be obviously disorganised, non-unionised and whose labour power would cost very little. The effects of this new strategy of capital would be sharp and varied.

The same has happened in Italy. Those small clusters of factories have given a new lease of life to middle-capital, which in Italy is organised around the Christian-Democratic Party, which is now beginning to operate as a full satellite of the large multinationals. This sector of capital is the object also of the flirtations of the Italian Communist Party. This process has also changed the composition of the working class bringing into the productive cycle large sectors of people previously considered as 'marginal' or 'unemployable'.

Finally, the last major aspect of the economic plan of the Italian bourgeoisie has been the export of capital abroad in 'safe' pastures like the USSR and Algeria, where strikes are illegal because these countries are obviously socialist. FIAT in fact has built a whole factory-town named Togliattigrad (eh, yes) after the famous leader of the Italian Communist Party Togliatti.

The result of this economic strategy has been the dramatic increase of unemployment amongst the previously militant sectors of the working class who have been forced to either casual or low paid employment ('black work' - lavoro nero as the Italian comrades refer to it) or are unemployed and engaged in politically organising the unemployed or indeed in expropriations of money, goods from supermarkets etc. as there is no type of social security in Italy.

This is the situation the Italian working class and revolutionaries have to confront. And here we enter perhaps the most crucial aspect of our work with Italian comrades: the necessity and possibility of learning from the ways and methods they have developed in confronting this strategy of capital.

.....

The wealth of revolutionary experience accumulated by the Italian proletariat stretches back to the beginning of the century. Under the revolutionary leadership of anarcho-syndicalist Trade Unions, Italian workers organised themselves in a powerful fashion. In the aftermath of the 1st World War the crisis of Italian capital opened a certain space and Italian workers with Antonio Gramsci at their head went onto an attack on the State occupying factories and setting up factory councils modelled on the Soviets.

In the thirties and forties the armed Garibaldi Brigades, formally linked to the Communist Party but incorporating many non-members, fought against both Mussolini and Franco in Spain as well as the German Nazis during the occupation. They set the stage for the later development of a revolutionary opposition inside the Italian Communist Party which after the II. World War laid down arms and compromised by participating in a National Coalition Government.

More recently, the massive struggles of Italian workers in FIAT, Alfa-Romeo, SIEMENS and in other industrial concentrations set the tone for a widespread opposition to the plans of capital and heralded the crisis of 1969-1972. Those struggles clarified the extent of discontent among workers, their anger against exploitation and in fact raised for the first time in recent history the question of THE REFUSAL TO WORK instead of the traditional Right to Work. Those struggles also threw a huge spanner in the works of many Trotskyist and dogmatic sects which had set themselves up as " spokesmen and representatives of the working class ". It was precisely those mass struggles which completely ridiculed the claims of those organisations to be the ' vanguard ' and fragmented them to an extent that Italy today is the only major country in Europe which has been spared of that particular deviation. There is a lesson to learn from there somewhere.

There is lots to learn from the struggle of Italian workers against capital. They have fought consciously, efficiently and in an organised way against the bourgeoisie and its State, against the limits imposed by reformism, against the legalism of the radicals. They have fought against work , against productivity , against profit , against differentials , against mobility.

Then there is the capacity of the Italian working class to see and understand the State not as a neutral referee in the struggle of classes but as an organ, a tool of the bourgeoisie. The absolute refusal of workers to see nationalisations as somewhat progressive and their most recent military opposition in workplaces and communities against the armed might of the State are invaluable lessons to learn from. And it's no wonder that none of our own Irish radicals is likely to talk of or even mention Italy as an example of the revolutionary struggle of the working class....for Italian workers are fighting for communism not dilly-dallying with social democracy.

There are also major lessons to learn from the struggle of Italian workers against revisionism, against the collaboration of the Italian CP. The PCI is the second biggest national Party, extremely powerful inside the Trade Union leadership and the State Administration. It runs and manages most big cities in Italy, including Rome and Florence and even entire regions like Emilia or Tuscany. The Italian working class has learnt the lesson of what it feels like to be bludgeoned by a cop who is a member of the PCI and gets a ' fair wage '. Italian workers have learnt what it feels like to be called a fascist and a provocateur when you take up arms to defend yourself against State terrorism. Images of the 6 Cos and developments inside the Republican movement there.

Another lesson to register there is the emphasis put in Italy on the mass character of politics and the absolute importance of mass organisations controlling and directing their own affairs. This coupled with the capacity of the proletariat to mobilise other more marginal sectors of the people, like the unemployed, the youth and the prisoners into political action has created a situation where gigantic numbers of people debate and discuss politics in a way inconceivable by other comrades of non-Italian origin.

Finally, and perhaps the most crucial aspect of them all, the capacity and ingenuity of the Italian working class in combining and fusing legal and illegal forms of struggle. In creating large armed organisations which defend and impulse struggles, hit the State and prepare situations of effective counter power. This is perhaps the most terrifying aspect of the Italian working class as far as the Italian bourgeoisie is concerned. And this is the focal point that our own little legalist sectarians will never grasp; mouthing, as they are, the catch cries of the bourgeoisie and its State. As they go on and on about ' terrorism ' , ' adventurism ' and the like.

.....

Bring the fight right into the heart of the State ! This was the main slogan ringing the streets of Bologna last September when nearly 100,000 revolutionaries demonstrated against State repression. This is a slogan of the armed organisations of the Italian revolutionary Left : the Red Brigades and the Armed Proletarian Nuclei. But it was also a slogan embraced by comrades of Autonomia Operaia and Lotta Continua...the two major organisations of the ' legal ' revolutionary Left. This is a slogan we support. And we are anxiously looking forward the day it will echo in the streets of Derry and Dublin, Cork and Belfast.

RS Dec. 77

HISTORICAL NOTES ON ITALY

I. The II. World War :

Through the entire period of the 2nd World War, resistance to fascism was the very heart and center-point of the struggle of the Italian working class. The resistance movement was a multi-class movement, with the National Liberation Committees (CLN) as the leading bodies of armed struggle against nazism and the collaboration of Italian fascists with the occupying German forces.

There were three major tendencies inside the CLNs : the GARIBALDI BRIGADES of the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) , the WHITE FORMATIONS of the Christian Democrats (CD) and the ACTION PARTY of the socialists and middle- of - the road radicals.

After the end of the War, between 1945-48 there was a National Government in power. A coalition of the above three forces made up the backbone of that Government. The slogan of the period was " Produce for the reconstruction of the Nation " . All over Europe, the defeat of fascism had resulted in similar National Coalitions. The political perspectives of the different Communist Parties, following the YALTA agreements between Stalin and the Americans and the British, was precisely that the time was not ripe for revolution and that the establishment of those National Coalitions was the correct strategy. This is important to grasp because the so-called ' historical compromise ' of the PCI is not the result of any NEW situation in the sixties but a political strategy put forward for the first time by the then General Secretary of the PCI Togliatti on his return from Moscow back in 1943. That perspective was elaborated in the 1943 Congress of the PCI in Salerno and Italian comrades refer to it as the ' svolta ' di Salerno (Svolta means a turn / a tumble) .

The Salerno perspective characterises the entire historical period from 1943 to the late sixties. It had as a result the liquidation of the armed organisation of the Italian working class carried out by Togliatti himself who was made Minister of Justice in the Coalition Government. The political initiatives of working class militants were completely disarmed and the compromise of the PCI created a space for the bourgeoisie to reorganise and regroup.

The most interesting phenomenon of that immediate after -II. World War period was the emergence of the VOLANTE ROSSE which would translate roughly as the Red Flying Squads . This organisation was made up of a small group of communists who were active inside the urban units of the Garibaldi Brigades called Armed Proletarian Groups (GAP) .

Many of those militants refused to lay down their arms and continued their anti-fascist activity under the new name of Volante Rosse. They carried out armed attacks against fascists who had been ' pardoned ' by the Government . They kidnapped a number of Milanese industrialists and let them loose in the streets without clothes. They supported armed land occupations and also occupied the Milan Town Hall when an old PCI partisan accepted to become Mayor and Police Chief. They were a tremendous subversive influence inside the Communist Party and reached the height of their political sway when in 1948 a so-called madman tried to kill Togliatti. In fact, the madman was connected to the Sicilian bandit Giuliano who was himself connected to the Mafia. The attempt failed but the VOLANTE ROSSE took a series of actions around the two themes of

- a. Proletarian justice and b. Support of all working class offensive

The PCI on the other hand was preaching " patience " and " coolness " . The Party abandoned the Volante Rosse militants to the bourgeoisie. 25 communists went on trial and imprisoned.....many hundreds were expelled from the PCI. That historical experience and the politics of the Volante Rosse are crucial in understanding the present day armed organisations of the revolutionary Left such as the BRIGADE ROSSE (Red Brigades) .

II. The 1950's :

1948 marks the end of one historical period and the beginning of a new one. In 1948 the compromise between capital and the PCI breaks down ; the Communist Party was thrown out of the Government as was the case in all European countries. The Christian Democrats began to take a clearly defined pro-US stand which clashed with the projects of the PCI.

Italian capital began to reconstruct itself around the basic model of building vast industrial poles of very high working class concentration, like FIAT in Turin where over 100,000 workers were employed. The perspectives of the bourgeoisie at that period were concentration and monopoly control. The PCI was fighting for small industries and regional policies. The contradictions were too great. The alliance cracked and then burst open.

In the 1948 elections the Christian Democratic Party came to power with 49% of the vote. They immediately introduced a 'system' according to which an alliance or a Party which had 50% of the votes plus one vote would have the right to 66% representation in the Parliament. This amazing system guaranteed the Christian Democrats and their right-wing allies an uninterrupted reign for many many years to come.

Also in 1948, the labour movement was split into two : the General Confederation of Labour was hacked into two. The PCI retained the majority and the name while the Christian Democrats built another Trade Union named CISL. The CGL at that time had a membership of 2 million workers.

From 1948 onwards, the Italian bourgeoisie helped through the US Marshall Plan began to build a capitalist Italy. This process involved inevitably a widespread repression of the popular forces. Economically they laid the basis for the subsequent boom of Italian capital. But first what had remained of the popular resistance had to be smashed. The remains of the anti-fascist resistance, those who had kept their arms were broken up. All the popular committees of peasants, tenants or unemployed were repressed.

Industry played a very important role in this expansion of capital. From the early 50's industrial expansion was based on the car and its related industry. (basically FIAT and ALFA-ROMEO). Agriculture also followed in the wake of this intense industrialisation. Investment in land laid the basis for a capital-intensive agriculture involving, as in Ireland, a massive exodus from the countryside as well as a series of oppositional movements in the South.

Repression was very high. Italian comrades refer to this period as the DI SCHELBA period after the Minister of the Interior of the time. Trade Unionism was further repressed and in the late fifties, the bosses split the movement even further by creating management controlled Unions like the SIDA inside the FIAT works.

This break-up of the Labour Movement cut from top to bottom. At times it took the form of a vertical break inside one factory. And it is at this point that the first small signs of workers self-organisation outside Union structures became evident. Our comrades of Autonomia Operaia (Workers Autonomy) argue that the historical anarchist tradition of the Italian working class played a crucial role in this instance.

The late fifties were uneasy. Unemployment was spreading.....and the extreme right was attempting to re-organise. In July 1960 a very crucial event took place in the northern port of Genova. The fascists got permission from the Minister of the Interior to hold their Congress in Genova which has traditionally been a communist town and well organised around the port by the militant dockers. There was mass opposition to this Congress from the very beginning...despite the protests the Minister decided to let it go ahead. On the day of the opening there was a near-insurrection in the town where thousands upon thousands of working people rioted and opposed the fascists. In the wake of the fighting the Government under Prime Minister TAMBRONI fell. The PCI tried to control the rioting unsuccessfully. Italian comrades argue that the influence of the VOLANTE ROSSE and a new generation of revolutionary communist militants in the event was of prime importance. A new page had been turned in the development of the Italian revolution.

III. 1960-1968 :

From 1960 to the 70's a new cycle opens up in Italy. The Christian Democrats who had governed Italy since 1948 with a center-right Coalition now begin to search possibilities of a centre-left alliance. Stability and how to get it is the slogan of the day. There are two major reasons behind this :

- (1) Capital accumulation is now well beyond the phase of reconstruction and needs EXPANSION. This would obviously require the socialisation of the productive forces and firmer control of the working class.
- (2) This control has to be firm but not crude....the sectors of the popular masses which can explode have to be neutralised by a certain amount of political 'representation'.

The direct result of this new phase is the introduction inside the working class and its organisations of a compellingly new set of contradictions. First and foremost, this expansionist stage of capital provokes violent confrontations around the socialisation of production itself. During the defensive period of 1945-60 there was a tight organic connection between the demands made by workers and the capacity of Trade Unions to organise and fight if not actually win some of those demands. Now there is a massive working class offensive. The workers want more and more and this throws the Trade Unions into a completely different situation. The Trade Unions become, and are seen to become, incapable of reflecting the growing demands of a numerically and politically developing working class.

In 1962 another event takes place in Turin which was linked to the events in Genova two years earlier. If Genova was the end of a chapter, PIAZZA STATUTO in Turin was a beginning of another. FIAT workers organised independently and outside Trade Unions attack the police....workers of other factories participate too. The Trade Unions oppose, of course, these 'violent events' and the workers as a reply burn down the HQ of UIL - the Trade Union controlled by the Social-Democrats.

From 1962 we witness slowly the birth and growth of CUBs which were Rank and File Committees completely independent of all Party or Trade Union control and open to all workers whether in the Union or not. The CUBs began to co-ordinate nationally by 1965.

In 1963 FIAT had its first crisis of overproduction. Italian industry was at a bottleneck and needed to find markets which had been saturated. It is in this period that FIAT internationalises itself and in fact becomes a multinational...many technological innovations were introduced which accentuate the contradictions between national and international capital for these 'inventions' are invariably controlled by US technology.

The entire period between 1962-68 was one of militant activity and re-organisation. After the TURIN events in 1962 there were definite signs of a new unity born at the rank-and-file level....workers were beginning to get politicised...mass meetings were being opened to 'outsiders' such as students, revolutionary militants etc. The Trade Unions up to their neck in sectarian corporatism opposed all this and began themselves a new series of negotiations for 'unity' etc.

The same period was also the birth phase of important revolutionary organisations. The preview to this was highlighted by the birth of a journal called CLASSE OPERAIA (Working class) which very soon changed name to LA CLASSE (The Class). It was revolutionary intellectuals active in these two journals who were directly behind the building of the two most important revolutionary organisations of that period : LOTTA CONTINUA (The Struggle Continues) and POTERE OPERAIA (Workers Power).

These two journals undertook a piercing critique of Trade Unions accusing them of being redundant for they were incapable of analysing and opposing correctly the new demands of capital. These journals defined a series of new theoretical concepts, a new analysis of the restructuring of the working class and the fragmentation of capital. Armed with new methods of analysis and the birth of new revolutionary organisations, a vibrant new revolutionary force and struggle emerged in Italy. The HOT AUTUMN was on its way.

IV. 1968 and afterwards :

The 1969 Autumn - Italy's Hot Autumn - was the highest point of the Italian working class. Violent strikes broke out in ALFA - ROMEO, in FIAT and in PIRELLI. Rioting took place in CASERTA, PESCARA and in REGGIO CALABRIA. In the latter case troops were brought into town. Ten thousand workers were put on trial for the events of Autumn 1969...for events such as the Battles of CORSO TRAIANO and NICHELINO where workers and students demonstrated together and put up barricades to extend the struggle from one factory to other factories and into the community. Workers pelted managers with cans and formed 'snake processions' inside the factories disrupting production and profits.

up

A FIAT boss, in his own way, summed it/like that :

"The 1969 FIAT is a very bad year to buy. Bits fall off, the doors won't shut and the electricals do funny things"

In the HOT AUTUMN the working class was fighting on two fronts : against the violent expansion of capital AND against the unified social-democratic/revisionist bloc. The nature of the battles changed as time went on. Workers began to fight not only for higher wages, which was how the whole thing started, but, and especially, AGAINST PRODUCTION. New types of tactics emerged : Workers blocked the entrance and exit of goods into and from the factories. They halted production not by striking outside the factories but by organising stoppages while staying inside. Other sections of the working class, like women in the communities and students also erupted alongside this surge forward. Autumn 1969 in Italy alongside May 1968 in France were a high point of the entire European working class movement. It is interesting to note that the Civil Rights Movement in the 60s as well as a tremendous increase in the economic struggle of the working class was also taking place in Ireland at the same historical period.

(It is impossible to fully document here all that took place during Autumn '69; however an interview reprinted at the end of this document is perhaps typical of the feeling among Italian workers at that time.)

Autumn '69 was a turning point....it opened a new historical period. Some argue that "it failed to make the revolution". Yes, that's true. ^{lack of} Comrades in Autonomia Operaia argue that this 'failure' was perhaps due to a full comprehension and analysis of the power of the bourgeoisie and capital, its capacity of recovery of lost ground and counter-offensive.

Outside the autonomous and spontaneous offensive of the working class which continued at a lesser tempo well into 1971, there is one other organisational experience which should be mentioned. In 1968 there appeared a new organisation with an old name: the GAP (Proletarian Armed Groups). It carried out a series of armed actions against what it called "the fascisation of the State" and the dangers of a right-wing coup. The GAP continued its activities until 1972 and was made up by two basic tendencies :

- a. The old generation of the 1960's which were part of the VOLANTE ROSSE and participated in the GENOVA riots.
- b. A new batch of communists who identified closely with J.G.FELTRINELLI - a left-wing editor of books with excellent connections with Cuba.

The perspective of the GAP was mainly anti-fascist and defensive. They developed organisational links with POTERE OPERAIA. When Feltrinelli died in 1972 POTERE OPERAIA was the only organisation which acknowledged him as a comrade in arms. Most of the others ignored the death or called it a CIA plot.

Inside the bourgeoisie, the contradiction of national and international capital opened up during this phase. Sections of middle capital, close to the Christian - Democrats shifted sharply to the right. The bourgeoisie fragmented and sections of the Italian capitalists started flirting with the colonels who had taken power in neighbouring Greece. A right-wing ideology, completely in contradiction with the centre-left position of the big monopoly interests appeared. This new situation, fraught with dangers as it was, polarised the working class and the organisations of the Left. The Communist Party opposed the reactionary projects of middle capital but was completely oblivious or pretended it didn't notice the projects of big capital.

It is crucial here to note that the Italian Communist Party has not got an 'anti-monopoly' project. This clearly distinguishes it from, say, the French Communist Party or the Communist Party of Ireland. In this respect, the Italian CP would be closer to Sinn-Féin - the Workers Party with which in fact it has excellent relations.

The working class offensive which had started in the middle sixties and reached its peak towards the end of 1969 slowed down and had become only a trickle by 1972. As a result of that offensive though, the energy, analysis and practical experience which had been generated gave birth to a new generation of political militants - of revolutionaries.

1972 seems to be a very important year for the Italian revolutionary organisations. POTERE OPERAIO dissolves itself after a number of internal splits, schisms etc. At the same time LOTTA CONTINUA enjoys a tremendous growth. And finally the two armed organisations of the revolutionary left: the Red Brigades and the Armed Proletarian Nuclei enter the political scene.

This corresponded also to the slowing down of the right-wing shift of the bourgeoisie. Capital had recomposed itself and began building a new cycle of accumulation - in the wake of the 'energy crisis'. The Christian Democrats stabilised one more time abandoned their projects of a centre-left alliance and reverted to the more traditional centre-right coalition under the hegemony of the CD Party.

The integrations of national and international capital ripened and U.S. based monopolies began to assert their influence. The Communist Party of Italy entered a new phase known today as the 'historical compromise' according to which the PCI would be ready to co-operate with the Christian Democrats "in order to overcome the crisis". The comrades of Autonomia Operaia define this new phase as a 'neo-corporatist' phase of the PCI.

This neo-corporatism of the Communist Party was the response of revisionism to the new cycle of capital which after the violent confrontations of the 1968-71 period had changed tactics. The heavily concentrated car-industry was progressively abandoned while a whole new cycle of accumulation was built around new industries connected with petrol and gas. Capital slowly dismantled all the structures that workers had managed to build over the previous decade by shifting people about from section to section, from factory to factory and at times from town to town. The big proletarian concentrations of FIAT were broken up. The proletarian communities built around the huge factory complexes were also attacked and bulldozed.

But before we examine this new expansive cycle of capital let us look briefly at the situation inside the revolutionary Left at that moment:

V. The growth of the revolutionary Left

As already mentioned, the expansionist phase of capital in the 12 years between 1960-72 had created a background of class revolt and struggle which provided the political framework of new analyses and new organisation. The classical texts of Marx's 'Grundrisse' and the 'Early Philosophical Manuscripts' were unearthed. This theoretical working-out of the living experience of the working class starts with FIAT and appears for the first time in the journal LA CLASSE. Inside that journal were active a number of very important revolutionary intellectuals who today are the acknowledged leaders of the revolutionary movement. They were mostly ex-students of either the University of PISA or of that of TRENTO which were the two centres of student radicalisation and revolt... a role similar to that played by Queens in the 60s and by UCD in the 26 Cos during that same period.

In 1968 in Turin came a break between the militants active in LA CLASSE. The two tendencies were to give birth more or less immediately to the two major revolutionary organisations: POTERE OPERAIO and LOTTA CONTINUA. The fundamental difference between the two seemed to be the respective role of students and workers in the revolutionary process. This was a real burning point at the time as in TURIN since 1968 a real fusion had taken place in the factory general assemblies where students were welcome to come and put forward their views.

-- LOTTA CONTINUA put the emphasis on the student movement. It encompassed many different tendencies of the student movement and conceived of itself as a MOVEMENT OF STRUGGLE and less of a political Party. In the 4 years between 1968 and 1972 it grew enormously and covered all sections of the student movement like an umbrella. Its political characteristics were the violent rejection of Trotskyism as well as dogmatism. LC grew nationally, had a daily paper of a circulation which at times hit 35,000 copies a day and became a reference point of an enormous political current with great mass campaigns against fascism in the early period and for the liberation of political prisoners later. It was the one organisation which at the beginning supported the struggle of common law prisoners in their revolt against the State. It was also the only single Italian organisation which supported actively the struggle of Irish people. LOTTA CONTINUA are still remembered with affection in certain parts of Belfast and Derry.

But LOTTA CONTINUA never really managed to become an organisation of the working class. It was more of a transmission belt of the struggles of the workers towards the students and other sectors of the people. It was weak on organisation while it had a huge influence on 'opinion' - especially through its daily which still thrives today.

The most severe criticism we have heard of LOTTA CONTINUA was made by comrades who were members of that organisation 4-5 years ago but have today left and joined AUTONOMIA OPERAIA. According to them the most severe handicap of LOTTA CONTINUA was its political opportunism which in one way or the other was the result of the weak theoretical positions of the organisation. Secondly, another aspect of severe condemnation is the legalism of LC and its incapacity of maintaining a principled position on armed struggle.... a question around which LC zig-zagged and still does after 8 years.

-- POTERE OPERAIA, on the other hand, was more 'workerist'. It was born as a result of the active involvement of a certain number of comrades active in the journal LA CLASSE in the struggles of FIAT and PORTO MAGHERA. POTERE OPERAIA played a very important role in leading and politically directing the HOT AUTUMN inside workplaces. They were the first ones to theorise and generalise the wildcat strike and the blocking of goods. But the tremendous theoretical capacity of POTERE OPERAIA was never coupled with an organisational capacity. PO went into a crisis as soon as the working class offensive slowed down. Tendencies and schisms developed and by the time capital had broken the working class offensive in 1972 PO was in bits.

A high degree of polarisation took place inside the organisation. First to break away was a workerist fraction led by the Milanese intellectual Sergio Bologna which created the journal PRIMO MAGGIO (1st of May) which still continues and is highly influential in Milan. Then another break came with a more orthodox Marxist-Leninist position which took the Soviets as a point of reference. This fraction was led again by a Milanese intellectual named Scalzoni and is very active today inside AUTONOMIA OPERAIA. Finally a third tendency with very definite views on workers autonomy and armed struggle tried to keep PO going but finally dissolved the organisation in 1972.

There are other important revolutionary organisations as well in Italy. There is AVANGUARDIA OPERAIA (Workers Vanguard) mainly centred in Milan whose politics are very close to a left break-away of the Communist Party called 'Il Manifesto'. There is also another Marxist-Leninist organisation called MOVIMENTO di LAVORATORI per il SOCIALISMO (Workers Movement for Socialism) which has more 'orthodox' pro-Chinese politics.

One could not possibly go into details about all these organisations in a publication such as ours. It is interesting to note though that there is a process of unification or simple dissolution of the smaller organisations today. And there is the phenomenal growth of AUTONOMIA OPERAIA - the biggest organisation of the revolutionary left - which dates back to 1975.

VI. The situation since 1972

The model of accumulation adopted by Italian and international capital since 1972 is based :

- a. On the mobility of the working class, on workers being forced to forgo their skills, security of employment etc. and,
- b. On the breaking-up of big industrial concentrations and thereby defusing militancy .

This model also relies on the setting-up of gigantic computerised technological centres of CONTROL which employ very few highly skilled technicians who direct production of million and one smaller centres from afar. This goes hand in hand with a full US monopoly control of technology and the gradual shift of accumulation from car-based to chemical-based industry. The increasing penetration and control of multinational capital begin to submerge the contradiction between national and international capital which characterised the earlier period. Instead it moulds and shapes a new growth of middle-scale Italian based capital which begins to play a subordinate role like a conveyor belt to international capital.

This situation works for the benefit of important sections of the Christian-Democratic Party which through their control of the state begins to build new structures like IRI (very much like the IDA) which finances and controls this integration.

The PCI has put up no defence and no resistance. In fact a number of important Communist Party people are in total agreement with the above process which is after all identical to the small industry model which the Communist Party itself tried to put into operation in the regions that it controls: especially in Toscana (region around Florence) and Emilia (region around Bologna) See Map.

The Trade Unions put up no defence either and in many cases co-operated fully with this increasing penetration of international capital. (Comrades who know of the various sweetheart deals of the ITGWU with multinationals wouldn't be surprised at this).

These developments took the working class by surprise and contributed to the swift decline of militancy on the shop-floor, especially in 1973 and 1974. The vanguard sectors of the working class, concentrated around FIAT, were slowly taken apart by the new strategy of capital. There was a last attempt at the end of 1972 by FIAT workers to hit capital and this is known as the FACCOLETTI ROSSI (Red Handkerchiefs) experience. A limited number of FIAT workers tried actually to destroy machinery and goods by going around from section to section and attacking key lines while covering their faces with red handkerchiefs. This experience was short-lived.

The revolutionary Left was also very slow in responding to this new defensive stage. Carried away by the militancy of the previous 4 years, organisations were incapable of analysing and setting new perspectives and strategy. Something similar happened in Ireland too when after the burning of the British Embassy in Dublin and Free Derry in the 6 Cos, revolutionary organisations lost their momentum and any influence they may have had on events.

These developments also explain in a certain sense the huge development of clandestine and armed organisations like the BR and the NAP which theorising from this defensive stage began arguing for military action ' on behalf ' of the workers.

Towards the end of 1974 and all during 1975 a new analysis began to emerge from the revolutionary Left. Its source was , one more time, the ex-POTERE OPERAIA militants who had continued political work in small groups and collectives around the country. At the same time all the other organisations had entered a swift decline. LOTTA CONTINUA shrank to a quarter of its 1972 size. . . . splits followed splits and even the considerable development of mass movements like those of the unemployed and women could not halt the decline.

The emerging new analysis and the organisational forms it took gave birth to a new organisation : AUTONOMIA OPERAIA. Most of the ex-POTERE OPERAIA militants and many others from other organisations form the backbone of this new and exciting organisation.

Revolutionary militants like TONI NEGRI and SERGIO BOLOGNA argue today that the vanguard of the anti-capitalist struggle in Italy is no longer the unskilled and mass-line worker of the earlier period. Instead the vanguard is made up by the exploited proletariat under this new type of capital accumulation described above.

They include in their definition of vanguard all those sections of the working class who have needs that capital cannot possibly satisfy. And they define their new concept of revolutionary vanguard under the name OPERAIO SOCIALE (which would roughly translate as socialised worker). This concept of socialised worker is in fact quite large and includes all those who fight for the immediate satisfaction of their needs such as unemployed, women, the young and of course the factory workers working in the new type of small to medium type factories as satellites of the multinationals.

Debate on the above is raging at present in Italy but ^{what} is undeniable is that the new analysis of AUTONOMIA OPERAIA is gathering massive support not only from the non-organised sectors of the working class but also from hospital workers, transport workers, teachers and especially the mounting numbers of the unemployed.

The same developments are perceived quite differently by the other forces of the Left :

- The Communist Party of Italy has recently theorised its new model of ' the dual society ' : according to this there exist today in Italy two societies. The first made up of PRODUCTIVE workers AND PRODUCTIVE CAPITAL and that society is the one which is going to build the future and makes up the constituency of the PCI. Unfortunately alongside this productive society coexists another marginal and parasitic non-productive society made up of all those unemployed, young who don't particularly want to work, women, homosexuals, hippies, prisoners etc AND non-productive speculative/finance capital. And it's that society which has to be destroyed. It is clear where that kind of conception leads to. It is also interesting to note how heavily the recent publication entitled ' The Irish Industrial Revolution ' by Sinn Fein the Workers Party has been influenced by the brilliant theories of the PCI.

- On the other hand there has developed in Italy for the first time a definite political tendency which is attempting to get rid of all traditional Marxist - or other - forms of analysis and is trying to live out its ' freedom ' and ' life ' today and now. Revolution here and now was the slogan of the Metropolitan Indians as they call themselves in Bologna last September. This tendency is wrongly and maliciously put into one basket with revolutionary militants and written off as ' ultra-left ' , ' adventurist ' and similar epithets.

The AUTONOMIA OPERAIA comrades argue that the new cycle of accumulation undertaken by capital since 1972 has fragmented and divided the working class. The unity achieved in the 1968-71 period has been seriously damaged. They argue that the two most significant strands inside the working class today are the traditional highly organised proletariat under the hegemony of the PCI (metalworkers, dockers, miners) working in what remains of the great industrial concentrations and what they call the metropolitan proletariat made up of socialised workers (as defined above) .

The unity of the two strands is the primary aim of the revolutionary Left. There is violent opposition to all ' theories ' , such as the one mentioned peddled by the PCI or indeed others who argue that traditional workers have to be written off, which polarise the two strands . The building of that unity under a form of organisation which would be autonomous from capital and the State, autonomous from the PCI and the Trade Unions and capable of swift and sharp offensives is basically what defines the political project of AUTONOMIA OPERAIA.

(The following conversation was recorded in Turin during December 1970 . In it 3 workers from FIAT describe their experiences coming to work in the industrial cities of the North and from the rural South.)

Question : Has there always been a tradition of struggles in FIAT ? Or were the clashes of 1969 a new type of experience ?

Luigi : You mean was it the clashes that broke the laziness of the last twenty years here ? Yes, it was. Of course there were struggles before this time, but they were all dominated by the unions. And they were struggles that came around at fixed intervals, when the unions decided it was the 'right' time. So every 2 or 3 years, when the Union/Management Agreements were about to expire, we would have the classic situation - you know, two or three days of strikes, all kept within union control and the boss' repression would begin all over again. And the little politicisation and gains achieved through those two or three days would be blocked and buried in the next three years of inactivity and boss rule.

But then, in about 1966, the immigrants from the South began to arrive. And the whole social situation in Turin blew up, what with the shortage of housing, lighting price increases, the speculation and so on. All of a sudden there were 15,000 to 20,000 people arriving in the city, and quite apart from the way prices rocketed, there were not the facilities to cope with them.

C : When did the three of you arrive at FIAT ?

Luigi : These two are young. For my part, I've been at FIAT for twenty years. This lot are the new generation who've broken with everything that we've become used to.

Toni : I've been here for two years. I joined FIAT right at the time that the struggles started in fact.

C : When you two arrived in Turin what was it like for you ?

Nino : I've been here for a couple of years now. For most of the time I've worked in small places - you know sweat shops -

always inside Turin. And then I was taken on at FIAT. At the beginning I really didn't know about anything. But the political work there was already on the way, and there were students doing leafletting at the factory, explaining a few things to people, like what the union was all about. Then we had that whole big explosion during 1969. Everything went up. BOOM.

Toni : I'd never seen anything like this in all my life. Because as you know, I come from Calabria, and my town's a pretty small place. It's ruled by God you might say: 3 or 4 priests, who were all a bunch of shits, brought us up to be boy scouts and the like, and told us all about what they thought democracy was. Then there were the four or five Communists and the seven or eight fascists, and that's it. Really, Calabria is still a region that's in the hands of the counts and the barons that ran the place at the time of Mussolini - and who did very well out of him, what with their power, their villas and so on. That's the way Calabria is.

Anyway, down there, even if I only had 50 lire (3½ p. today) I could always buy myself a cheese roll or something. But I come up to Turin and fuck it, I find I'm paying out 200. It was all crazy to me. Then I began to pick up the politics that Lotta Continua were into. At first, you know, I didn't really understand too much. I used to read their leaflets, but only in a sort of informative way, so as to know what they were saying.

One day one of the comrades, student I think he was, hunted me out and began talking to me. He really attacked me because I was still in the Union. Before I worked at FIAT I'd worked for a few months in other little factories, and all that I'd heard was that the Unions were there to defend the workers. Of course, down in Calabria we don't even know what a Union is, people don't know that they exist. But gradually I began to understand what they really are.... There are so many things that I've learnt that I didn't know before, and I hope to be able to pass them on to all my workmates in the factory and help them understand for themselves what I've learnt.

At the beginning, when we were few, we started out struggles, by going around the factory in huge processions that you would think they would never end. We used to call them 'snakes'. One day there was an official strike called - for 3 hours. This was about the time that all the big strikes were happening, in autumn '69. A few of us got together with other militants and asked ourselves what we were going to do. We decided that the best thing would be to have a snake - a big march

round the factory pulling out everyone we could. So there we were, with the three hour union strike and two of us got together with five or six other comrades and contacted a few people from Lotta Continua. Then we set off. Just the seven of us. And by the time we got to the head offices where all the staff hang out, there were seven thousand of us. Bloody beautiful it was. The staff were all looking out of the windows and saw us down below. They didn't know what to do. And the few guards at the doors were terrified. Beautiful... Now when the next lot of contracts come along... well... this year we started with seven of us and we ended up with 7,000. Next time we'll start with 7,000 and end up with seventy thousand, and that'll be the end of FIAT. Goodbye Agnelli (RS: Agnelli is FIAT's top boss).

There's another time that I remember was really fine. We'd been in and out of strikes for a couple of days and then we were having one of those marches inside the factory. And the people started saying "Let's kick out the supervisors. They've been giving us orders for hundred years now and we've had enough." So we went down and started routing them out. People were looking at them, laughing and jeering, spitting on them and they looked back as they wanted to kill us, but there wasn't a thing they could do. They just didn't know what was happening. There's them who've worked their arses off to become supervisors and there we were treating them like shit.

Luigi: It was these young people who began the fight, spontaneously. And we, logically, found that this was a sort of alternative to the usual union struggles. An alternative which went along with the contracts growing at the same time with the students. As you know, from 1967 the university movement joined up with the struggles of the workers.

Q: What has been the relationship between revolutionary workers and the militants from the student movement?

Luigi: It's been a sort of team effort really. Them outside and us inside. At the start we would work on all the antagonisms inside the factory, using them as a lever. For example say FIAT hadn't provided some work-clothes. We would kick up a fuss and the students would support us from the outside with loudhailers, gate meetings, leaflets, big posters and so on.

Usually what we do is find out the facts of the situation, write them in rough form and give them to the outside militants to print - because they're good at that sort of

thing. We hope that later on we shall begin to do the leaflets ourselves, and already we are starting to do some work - like typing and so on, as well as some of the distribution outside the gates.....

Q: So you can conclude that the new wave of struggle arrived with the immigrants and the students?

Luigi: Yes. Italian students understood very wisely and early on that the only way they could expect to have any life at all was by allying themselves with the struggles of the workers. This initially started with the Movimento Studentesco (Student Movement) and then continued with the revolutionary groups. So that was how it all started.

Apart from very early factory leafletting in isolated areas, like Pisa from 1964, it was in 1967 that real mass work began in front of factory gates. And this was precisely when all the new workers began to be signed on all from the South, cut off from their roots, who had burned their bridges behind them and come to Turin to find themselves without houses fit to live in, with sky-high prices and so on. Add to that the students who were focussing on these problems, pushing them towards eruption, and of course everything exploded. But it exploded in ways that were sometimes very disorganised, very incoherent and unconnected, sometimes even a real mess.

Now the spontaneous struggles are over. I'm convinced of it. When the struggles start again, they will have to be struggles for organisation. Last year we were fighting seven or eight of us at a time, limited within single shops, all of us at Mirafiori, linked through Lotta Continua, because we'd had enough of the unions. But now we are moving towards a situation in which we'll have the factory coordinated shop by shop. When we decide at a certain point to launch a strike, we'll start with an assembly in one shop, say Shop 55. Then we'll begin the round-up, setting off in a snake, towards, say, the Varnish Shop. Before we used to waste two or three hours getting everyone together, and by that time as we were going around collecting comrades, the anger would somehow melt away. To coordinate the struggle inside the factory means that when we decide on a snake, it no longer takes half an hour to get it moving. Every group, every shop, moves together, and when we start, we can come to a certain point where we can decide what objective we are going to be heading for. We can decide to leave the factory grounds and tie up with other factories in the area, radicalising the struggle outside the factory, so as to involve other places.

Q : What has been the role of Trade Unions during these struggles ?

Luigi: The Unions are there to make sure that workers are kept inside the system, and have less possibility of beginning to challenge it. The Unions are the political extensions of the sickness that exists inside the State: they are "the long arm" inside the factory of the political Parties. Every group, every political Party has a little hand inside the factory. The Christian Democrats have CISL, the Communists have the CGIL, the Socialists have a tendency inside the CGIL, the fascists, UIL is the Social-Democrats, even some Republicans... every one of them has a certain presence inside the factory to control the situation.

Now a lot of workers understand this. However, as yet they don't have an alternative. Inside FIAT the Unions don't count for anything and everyone's well aware of where they stand. But at the moment they are the only organisations with a voice, they are the only ones that can say anything when it comes to dealing with management. So that what's really necessary at the moment

is that we begin to create inside the factory agitational cells, or revolutionary committees, that are so strong and so well-rooted in the workers that they are an alternative to the internal commissions and the delegates that the Unions have set up. Thus we can begin to create a point of reference in the factory to which the less political workers can look, so that they can escape the control of the unions, can talk together and can politicise themselves further. And that is exactly what we are engaged in at the moment: to form nuclei, to come to some agreement among ourselves, to study and understand the situation and to provide a focal point inside the factory. These agitational cells are made up of normal workers inside the factory but the best of them are the activists.

Q : What are your aims with these agitational cells inside the factories ?

Luigi: With the cells, and with the revolutionary committees, if we manage to create them, we are trying not to be another union, but to provide a political and revolutionary perspective for the workers. We must not fall into economism, into parochialism. We must not say "Look we must fight for 5 lire more, or 100 lire more or to work one or two hours less." We are fighting, and of course we are not going to achieve it tomorrow, for power, because

the working class without power isn't worth a thing. Of course, we won't dissociate ourselves from the economic struggles, because for most workers economic struggles are the beginning. However, the economic struggles must go hand in hand with a revolutionary development of understanding, of politicisation, of awareness by the mass of the workers. Only thus can we hope for the seizing of power, because that's what we are aiming at. The point is to take the factory, because it's the factory that creates value, and it's us who should have it and not them.

I've been in this factory for twenty years now and I've seen people make so many mistakes. All the time fighting for a handful of rice you know. And it's never done us a scrap of good. But now they are beginning to understand that it's no good fighting for scraps, that the struggle now is to have everything. In the factory either you have everything or you have nothing. There can't be any half measures.

(This section reproduces two original documents from the two major currents of the Italian revolutionary left today :

The first is a joint communique from the two clandestine and armed organisations of the revolutionary left : the Brigade Rosse (Red Brigades) and the Nuclei Armati Proletari (NAP) (Armed Proletarian Nuclei). These two organisations are distinct from each other but in a number of occasions have worked together ; they have carried out common actions and explained their actions in a politically unified way.

The communique which follows was released in Turin on the 2nd March 1976 and was signed jointly by the Margherita Cagol (MARA) Column of the Red Brigades and the NAP. The communique was published in a book entitled I NAP (The NAP) and edited by Libri Rossi . It has been translated by comrades of RS from that book.

The joint communique represents quite accurately the political convergence of the two organisations although slightly hiding their political differences.

" The multinationals, Agnelli , Cefis (the State Industrial Corporation - trans.) and the Confederation of Industry have for some time now opened up a heavy offensive against the working class. They have been firing workers , pushing up the cost of living and creating an atmosphere of terror under the cover of which they hope to get a blank cheque to stabilise their profits which have been definitely undermined by the different struggles going on.

But they know that all this is not enough and that their ' order ' must be imposed with arms. In this plan the Police represent the spearhead and focal point of armed counter-revolutionary repression. The recent murders of working class people by the Police throw a glaring light on this ' brilliant ' history of the Police Force ... they have also demonstrated how the Police are really trying to wipe out the revolutionary vanguards.

The manner that they have built and put on the ready their massive terrorist apparatus shows their objective : to demoralise and defeat and crush every instance of proletarian resistance.

The license to kill of the ghastly forces of LAV has become today not only a license but an order to shoot to kill.

The policies of Berlinguer's Party (the Italian Communist Party - trans.) which up to now were designed to fit the plans of the bosses have recently and shamelessly become means of total collaboration to restabilise the imperialist order of the multinationals.

Faced with such a difficult and potentially counter-revolutionary situation, the working class is confronted with three fundamental problems:

- To organise at the level of class war, of ARMED STRUGGLE, to stop the State of the multinationals . The State is inflicting heavy blows on the class which although appearing legal are in fact based on military oppression.

- To struggle everywhere to DEEPEN THE CRISIS OF THE BOURGEOISIE. The needs of the working class today are, more than ever, antagonistic to the hopes of the bosses. The only interest of the working class is a communist revolution.

- To unify the workers movement around the strategy of armed struggle for PROLETARIAN POWER . The proletariat must be able to isolate the gallant knights of COMPROMISE and of the NATIONAL INTEREST.

Our attacks on police barracks are not just reprisals but show our strategy and line of war... a strategy which is built together with all the fighting revolutionary forces. We intend to pursue this line until final victory

BRING THE FIGHT INTO THE STATE

THERE SHOULD BE ONLY ONE ARMED FORCE : WORKERS WITH RIFLES
ON THEIR SHOULDERS.

ARMED STRUGGLE FOR COMMUNISM

(There follows in the communique a list of military objectives attacked by the Red Brigades and the NAP during the evening and night of the 1st March 1977 : Among them a local Police Station in Via Buon Gesù in Milan, a Police HQ in Via Zubiena in Turin, another Police Station in Sampierdarena in Genova and other objectives in Rome, Naples and Florence....all of them in one night)

Comrades,

The present communique is signed jointly by our two fighting organisations : the Brigade Rosse and the NAP and is part of our perspective of the building of a fighting single Party. As far as we are concerned, it is necessary to struggle for the unification of the entire revolutionary movement, making every effort...for from every experience of armed struggle is born an ever stronger political/military capacity and an ever stronger organisation of the revolutionary proletariat.

In this context, the Brigade Rosse and the NAP have been engaged in a political confrontation. This has confirmed that there do not exist strategic differences between the two organisations. Nevertheless the political practices are different, mainly due to the different history of the Red Brigades and the NAP and the different political paths that we have followed.

However, notwithstanding the political autonomy of both the Red Brigades and the NAP, we can from now on build our struggle and action together in a single fighting front.

To the bourgeoisie which has every interest in presenting forces as divided, scattered and fragmented we must put forward an ever greater unity of revolutionary organisation...an organisation which under the strategy of armed struggle is fighting for a communist society.

FORWARD TO A FRONT AGAINST THE COMMON ENEMY - UNITY OF
THE FIGHTING FORCES - ALL POWER TO THE ARMED PEOPLE FOR COMMUNISM.

Torino 2nd March 1976

Red Brigades - Margherita Cagol ! MARA ! Column *

Armed Proletarian Nuclei

* Margherita Cagol was a political and military leader of the Red Brigades . She was assassinated by the repressive forces of the State.

(The second document that we have translated is an analysis and presentation of the views of the Autonomia Operaia Committees in Rome on the question of how to build a strategy on the wages and general economic front. This document was written in January 1974 and is very representative of the views of Autonomia Operaia .)

Wages and autonomous organisation

The crisis with its specific characteristics has placed the questions of wages and employment on the centre of the political stage. The problem cannot be resolved any longer according to the traditional slogan 'Bread and work' !

The link between wages and spiralling inflation must be broken - we must break

the link of wages to the ups and downs of the capitalist cycle of production. This is the first objective and aspect of our demand for a ' guaranteed wage ' - a demand which plays the function of liberating wages from the cycle of capital...in a situation that capital tries to lay the burden of the crisis on the working class. The demand of ' the guaranteed wage ' has within it the refusal of workers to pay the cost of the crisis.

To break the link between wages and stagnation as well as all the different mechanisms of recession - to break the link of wages to the labour market and the direct conditions of work.....this is the second aspect and objective of our demand for a ' guaranteed wage '. It implies the refusal of the working class to pay the cost of the crisis and of the recession (costs which usually signify reduction of real wages, unemployment etc.) The strength of our demand is related of course to the extent of the organisation of the working class and puts the costs of the crisis onto the back of profits and not of the workers. The demand for a guaranteed wage builds on the refusal of workers to stand by the terrible conditions of the capitalist system and of the labour market as well as of rents.

But primarily the function of the demand for a guaranteed wage is to go beyond from and basically defeat the traditional strategy of the Trade Unions which never confronts the enemy of our class on a revolutionary manner but merely raises up the same capitalist banner of labour as an answer to unemployment with tactics such as the ' right to work ' , ' the releasing of the productive forces 'and they basically block all struggle.

Refusal to pay for the crisis means passing from the stage of our struggles during the sixties for a single wage for all (according to that demand militants were fighting for an end to bonus schemes, differentials and a proper living income of equal value for all workers) which confronted the capitalist division of labour to a new type of struggle for a living and guaranteed wage which is not tied up to productivity agreements..... a demand and a struggle against the power of capital in the factories, a struggle to break the link between wages and the capitalist cycle of production as well as the labour market. Under capitalism one must work in order to eat.....so when we say guaranteed wages always we assert our refusal of capitalism as well as all attempts by capital to break the unity between different sectors of the working class by recomposing it.

Under this perspective we don't believe, of course, in tying ourselves to an illusion of a state and of bosses willing to concede even an inch at a time of intense inflation and recession. We don't believe either in tying our economic perspectives, programme and strategy to the political requirements which consistently come up from the fight against the State. We believe that economic struggle has a certain relative autonomy in relation to the political struggle.

However, our demand for a guaranteed wage opens up the possibility of a whole range of intermediary objectives.....objectives we can take up, we can win.....we can build a relationship among all the different sectors of workers - we can achieve a new level of consciousness without which it is impossible to think that workers can win anything. The demand for a ' guaranteed wage ' is a strategy of attack for the new phase of our revolution today - as the demand of one single wage for all was the strategy from the beginning of the 60's of all those who wanted to build the autonomy of the working class.

The simple slogan for a defence of wages is not enough. It is a slogan limited to Trade Union struggle....it is defensive and it strengthens the class enemy. It defends work, it does in no way break from the reformist strategies of Trade Unions, it defends the right to work and thus the right of capitalists to increase production; it strengthens and consolidates the capitalist cycle of production and provides no way out of the crisis.

But the double bind of ' bread and work ' is squarely inside the framework of the will of capital...anybody advocating bread and work today must presuppose that workers must be somehow bent and under the choices and possibilities of capital. ' Bread and work ' , or ' the right to work ' , say nothing, they have never said anything about the crucial problem of employment....or indeed of the problem of under-employment, unemployment.....those demands have nothing to say about the contradiction between the factory and the countryside, between the North and the South. To call for bread and work or abstractly for the ' right to work ' is to call for defeat, for the launching of production, for the defeatist politics of reformism.

To make the demand for 'a guaranteed income' central in our strategy for the autonomy of the working class doesn't mean that we will desert the ground on which we have fought so many battles in these last few years....we have marched on the ground of 'One single wage for all'...now we will go further and beyond. We see our demand as an attack against the organisation of work in the factories, against the division on skills. We see our demand as an attack against the weight of work exploitation: speed of the chain, piece-rates, overtime.... A single wage for all was how we built and consolidated one pole of our alliance between sectors of the class....but that was a pole which without the demand for a guaranteed income will not weld together with the other pole: all those outside the factory....if the two poles don't click together that would be spelling long-term division and defeat.

Out of this situation and analysis comes the necessity to build the response of workers against the wages freeze...we must start from the factories. And we must continue our attack on the new process of deskilling, of the increases in productivity, of the increased repression and control of foremen and supervisors.

Today's demand for guaranteed wages unifies the class and throws the weight of the crisis more and more onto the bosses' back. It is for this reason that the Trade Unions, the bourgeoisie and the reformist Parties call all those who argue for a guaranteed wage "corporatist" portraying them as people who don't give a damn for 'the national interest' of the country. We say that the interests of the working class are irreconcilably opposed to those of the bosses...those interests cannot be squared inside a crisis....if workers fight for their interests they will push the bourgeoisie into a corner and set the first bases for proletarian power.

These are the autonomous objectives of the working class. We want workers to get a guarantee of an income equal to 100% of their wages if they are thrown onto the dole. This income must be financed by profits and the burden must be carried by the bourgeoisie until the time they provide new jobs. Our only guarantee that these objectives will not be recuperated is for the organisation to place and insert itself firmly amongst the masses of agricultural labourers, agricultural workers, under-employed, non-employed women and casual workers who have nothing to lose and lots to win from a guaranteed wage.

We must concentrate and lead this bloc of the people under the direction of the working class. We must direct against the bosses and their appropriation of social wealth. Squatting, knocking down prices, non-payment of gas, electricity or telephone bills, not paying for transport or schools, controlling prices and expropriating where necessary....these are our methods of reappropriating social wealth and new points of departure in affirming proletarian organisation and determining a level of social power and revolutionary capacity counter to the interests of capital.

The choices of the autonomous organisation of the working class today must be put forward as a full alternative to the reformist practice.. We must not accept any more the subordination of the needs of the proletariat to the choices of capitalist production. To this end, in this present phase, we must use all possible legal ways.... we must oppose all attempts of capital to push the cost of the crisis onto the back of the working class. These costs would mean that the working class will get poorer and exploitation will increase in the so-called interests of the 'country'.

Autonomia Operaia is a refusal of this system of exploitation which implies having to pay for the crisis of the cycle of capital. Autonomia Operaia is the rejection of the reformist leadership of the Trade Unions as well as the rejection of all types of subordination to the initiative of the bosses...Trade Unions today are inside the interests of capital. Autonomia Operaia must be understood as a deep-reaching organisation of the class and its battle to break the divisions and disorganising rivalries between sectors of the class.....divisions usually encouraged by reformism.

Autonomia Operaia is the welding of the class inside a political project which has as an objective to make the capitalist system impossible to govern. This project starts from the building of a consciousness and an attitude among workers which is firmly against production in the factories. It involves and encompasses the themes of

re-appropriation of social wealth and the struggle for a guaranteed wage as a direct rejection of labour and work under capitalism. It also circumscribes the building of a political leadership that clarifies and shows consistently the targets towards which we should march in order for proletarian power to become a reality.

The local political committees, the autonomous assemblies, the community associations and collectives are the first living and organised expressions of the autonomy of the working class and have proved themselves to be extremely important and substantial 'moments' of planned intervention and homogeneity of the class. These structures act as complexive organisations of the movement in a dialectical relationship to the rank-and-file of the reformist Parties as well as to the other organised expressions of the groups of the extra-parliamentary left. These organisms have within them a tendency to political and organisational centralisation; they are arrival points of the autonomous struggle and the organisational experience of the last two years. They are alternative reference points for the workers movement and new points of departure for struggles which are going to come for the building of a revolutionary project and programme.

Autonomous Workers Committees

Political Committees of ENEL *

(ENEL is the State organism for Energy in Italy)

(The above document was first published as part of a larger document written by the two signatories in January 1974 entitled The Energy Crisis and Restructuring. It appeared as part of a larger book on Autonomia Operaia with the same title under the Editing House of Savelli in May 1976) .



Prepared and printed in Ireland

Price 15 pence